

29458 and 29459. CUCUMIS MELO L.**Muskmelon.**

From the Maltese Islands. Presented by Mr. James Oliver Laing, American consul, Malta. Received January 26, 1911.

Seeds of the following; quoted notes by Mr. Laing:

29458. "Seeds from one dark melon (winter), grown in the island of Gozo, one of this group. This particular melon is the finest specimen of the fruit I have seen here."

29459. "Seeds from several yellow melons (summer)."

"There are two varieties of the Malta melon: The winter or green variety and the summer or yellow kind. The winter type has a dark-green rind, more or less netted, but sometimes almost smooth. The average Malta melon, whether green or yellow, is much less netted than the average Rocky Ford melon in the United States. The winter variety is more oval than the summer variety. Both have a large circular crown at the place of the insertion of the flower. The pulp of the winter melon is white or cream colored; that of the summer melon ranges through various tints of pinkish orange. The pulp of both varieties has a delicate flavor, but not as rich and full as that of a good American muskmelon.

"The rind of both kinds is no thicker than that of an American muskmelon, but is much tougher and more resilient. A blow that would crush the rind of an American muskmelon would leave a Malta melon uninjured. This makes them an excellent shipping variety.

"Winter fruit selected and stored by experts is frequently eaten in January, having been plucked in the first weeks of September. This is exceptional, but fruit which has been kept a month or six weeks is served at the best hotels in Malta.

"The seeds of the summer variety are planted in March and the fruit matures in August. Those of the winter variety are planted in April and mature in September. At the end of the third week after germination the number of seedlings in each hole is reduced to one or two. When the fourth leaf has developed the point of the plant is nipped off. No instrument is used, as the point is tender and is simply pinched off between the thumb and finger. This has the effect of causing the plant to throw out lateral shoots. From the time of pinching off the points until the fruit is as large as an egg the plants are dusted two or three times with flowers of sulphur to prevent mildew.

"The fruit is formed on the lateral shoots caused by pinching off the point. The plant is not raised on a support, but trails along the ground. If the sun is particularly hot the fruit is protected by drawing leaves and branches over it and weighting it down with a stone. This is done especially with the winter or green melons. During the entire growing period the ground is kept free from weeds. The melons are seldom watered artificially except when they are grown on shallow or bad soil. Most of the rainfall of the year is in February. Comparatively little rain falls between the dates of planting and picking. Each plant is allowed to nourish not more than two melons. After gathering the crop the melons are stored in well-ventilated places and should not touch each other.

"Melons are grown in all kinds of soil here. Although Malta is only 17 miles long, there are several distinct kinds of soil. They all, however, contain a large proportion of carbonate of lime. In some cases this ranges as high as 90 per cent. The soil in this case is only broken particles of rock. Melons grow in all these varieties of soil. One reason, perhaps, is the presence of phosphates and alkalies owing to the close proximity of the underlying rock. There is little rain in Malta, but what there is, is conserved admirably in a stratum of blue clay, which is almost impervious to water."

(*Laing.*)